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881 active and not to be lazy. She drinks only warm
[271] water. In the old days anything that she gathered
anyone could come along and take. She couldn't eat
[262] meat or salt but Washo don't think eggs are the
[263] same as meat."
(This last statement was in response to direct
questions and does not reflect special Washo traits.
[124] In fact, all food appears to have been forbidden for
[262] four days.)

The family of the girl immediately prepares as
[574] much food as possible to feed the guests. One informant
remembers in his youth that a family of a girl
[202] eligible for a dance would light a large fire part way
up on Job's Peak to announce the event.
The dance itself is carried out at night. Singing
[778] and hand-clapping accompany the dancing, which may
go on all night. During the dance the girl carries a
wand about six or seven feet long. The wand is made
of a very light wood, often elderberry, and painted
red with a native pigment.
In the past, groups camped about Dresslerville
staged their dances at the base of a prominent hill
[178] nearby. During the night the girl was required to run
to the top of the hill and light four fires; this practice
has been discontinued for many years, however, apparently
as a result of white accusations that the Indians
started range fires and also to avoid attracting
curious whites.
About dawn one of the girl's male relatives ran
forward and snatched the stick from her. He then ran
with it into the hills and hid it in an upright position
in some out-of-the-way place.
[856] The elderberry wand is a device used to insure
the girl's continued agility and lightness of foot. As
[824] long as the hidden stick remains unbroken the girl
will remain straight and agile.
After the stick was taken away, an older female
[824] relative took a small amount of ash on a whisk of
sage, and dusted the nude girl on the head, arms,
and legs. This ritual was accompanied by an informal
[782] prayer that the girl not suffer pains in her head,
arms, or legs. She was told: "I am doing this early
in the morning so that you will get up early in the
[431] morning and work hard." The whisk was then thrown
into the crowd, along with a gift, which today is usually
[178] a bit of money. Food or beads were apparently
used in the past.
After the dusting, a basketful of water was brought
[515] forward and the girl was bathed. The basket was then
thrown into the crowd. This was considered a high
point of the celebration. After she was bathed, a few
[302] dabs of native pigment were placed on her chest and
face.
The ceremony above was described as the "real
way to do it . . . the way they did it in the old days."
881 The Carson Valley Record Courier reports a puberty
dance held in the summer of 1919 in which at
178 least some of these activities were observed (although
the reporter thought he was attending a betrothal dance).
Some two-hundred Indians were in attendance. There
were no fires, only lanterns and flashlights. The participants
had taken up a collection and purchased watermelon,
ice cream, cake, pie, bread, and meat for the
[574] feast. The food was served (to the surprise of the reporter)
on a long table with plates. About midnight two
girls appeared in the center of the dancing circle carrying
long wands.
In 1926 Lowie witnessed a girls' dance near Minden

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● [202] [574] On the evening of the third day of fasting the girl ran up the hill with a firebrand and lit the four piles of firewood. Some say that her brother, sister, or other relative did it if the girl was too weak. The fires were a symbol to all who saw them that a girl's dance was to be held and everyone was invited. If the girl became ill, if there was a death in the girl's family, or if the family was too poor for a feast, there would be no fires and no dance. But the girl would still fast and go through the essential washing ceremony.

881 535 [778] By nightfall of the third day a fire was built near a level dancing area. The ceremony started with the chanting and swaying of about six to 12 women in a tight group of three or four rows. These women stood about 10 ft. from the fire and faced the fire eastward. Between these women and the fire were placed the girl's staff and another similar but unpainted staff. The ends of these staffs were buried partly in the ground about 6 ft. apart. The girl and her assistant stood between the staffs and faced the group of women, each with her outer hand on a staff and with their inner arms interlocked.

881 533 535 The women's chants were both learned and improvised. The texts had no meaning. The chanting was led by one woman while the others picked up the syllables and melodic line. At a ceremony observed on July 19, 1961, the melodic line varied, but the rhythm stayed about the same with a meter of about 90 beats a minute. The swaying of the women was at half of the meter of the singing. These are four of the several chants used: ʔIwiʔyá·ŋiʔi, ʔimilk'hó·ʔiya, nélonáne, and héyeya.

881 535 The girl (age 13) and her assistant (an old woman and, later, a woman of 25) danced about 20 "sets" with short pauses between. A "set" consisted of six or seven short jumps to the left and six or seven jumps back to the right repeated from three to five times. The women started a new chant with each set. A set took about 30 seconds and the rest interval was about 15 seconds. The girls danced about 14 minutes. The dance by the girls in front of the swaying and chanting women is called the melchéheʔ -- "to jump up and down in one place repeatedly" (Jacobsen, personal communication). It is believed to make the menstrual blood flow. If the menstruator is too sick or too weak to dance, her role in the dance may be taken over by another woman.

[178] [562] As soon as the woman's dance ended, the general dance for everyone (l̥eʔwéʔweʔ, "to crawl enclosing repeatedly") began on a large dance ground to one side of the fire. This was started by some older people who interlocked fingers and formed a circle while facing toward the center of the circle. The men and women danced separately, each forming an arc of the same circle. Today the separation of the sexes is only partially in effect and couples often dance side by side.